

CLAIMS

1. Image encoding apparatus configured to receive data defining respective colour values for pixels arranged in rows and columns to make up
5 said image, said apparatus being arranged to apply coding for pixels to provide image compression, wherein said apparatus is configured to encode said image as either sequential rows or sequential columns of pixel data, in dependence on which direction requires less storage.
- 10 2. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, being configured to apply run-length coding for runs of pixels having the same colour value to provide image compression.
- 15 3. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 2, being configured to apply run-length coding in row-wise and column-wise direction and to store the encoded data for whichever orientation requires less overall data.
- 20 4. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, being further configured to include in said data an indicator as to the coding direction, row or column, utilised.
- 25 5. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 4, wherein said indicator is a one bit flag indicating, in one setting, that row-based coding has been utilised and, in its other setting, that column-based coding has been utilised.
- 30 6. A method of encoding image data when specified as respective colour values for pixels arranged in rows and columns, comprising determination as to whether image compression through sequential row-wise or column-wise image coding requires fewer data bits for storage of the resulting encoded image.

7. A method as claimed in Claim 6, including run-length coding for runs of pixels having the same colour value in the row or column direction, as selected.

5 8. A method as claimed in Claim 6, including the step of including an indication in the encoded image data as to the selected coding direction.

10 9. A decoder apparatus configured, on receiving an image encoded according to the method of Claim 6, to determine whether row-wise or column-wise coding has been applied, and to apply the appropriate decoding to recreate an image.

15 10. A decoder apparatus as claimed in Claim 9, being further configured to identify, in a data stream comprising an encoded image, a data flag and the setting thereof to identify the direction of the coding applied.

20 11. A removable data carrier holding data defining at least one encoded pixel image, said image being run-length encoded as to pixel colour values in whichever of the row-wise and column-wise direction requires the fewer data bits.

25 12. A data signal carrying data specifying at least one encoded pixel image run-length encoded as to pixel colour values in whichever of the row-wise and column-wise direction requires the fewer data bits, said signal further including a data flag identifying the encoding direction, whether row-wise or column-wise.